

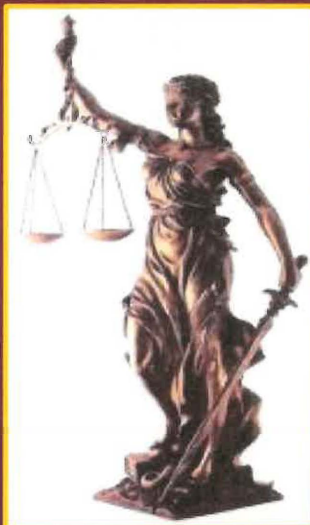
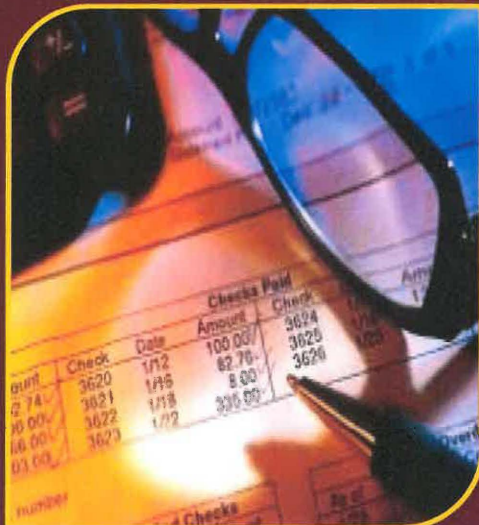
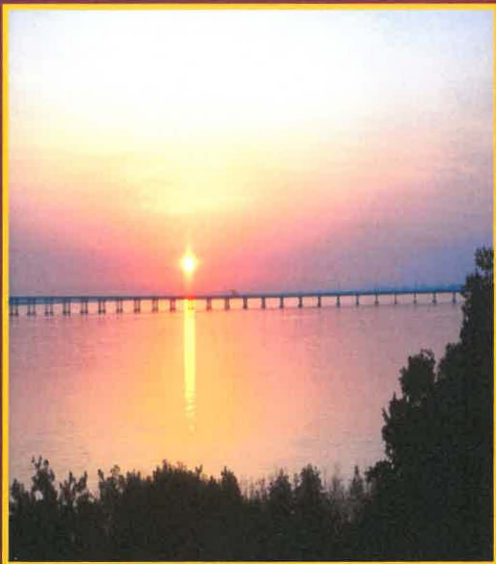


## DIVISION OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

KEN BURKE, CPA

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

# INVESTIGATIVE FOLLOW-UP REPORT OF FORT DE SOTO PARKING CITATION



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Inspectors General

Hector Collazo Jr.  
Inspector General/Chief Audit Executive

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JUNE 8, 2017  
REPORT NO. 2017-07



## Ken Burke, CPA

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

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June 8, 2017

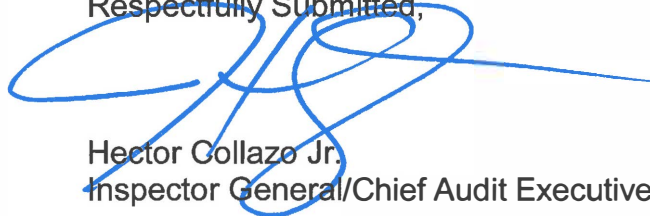
Paul Cozzie, Director, Parks and Conservation Resources  
David Bateman, Director, Court and Operational Services

We have conducted an Investigative Follow-Up of the Fort De Soto Parking Citation. The objectives of our follow-up were to determine the implementation status of our previous recommendations.

Of the three recommendations contained in the investigative report, we determined that one has been implemented and two were not implemented. The status of each recommendation is presented in this investigative follow-up. We commend management for implementation of one of our recommendations and continue to encourage management to fully implement the remaining recommendations.

We appreciate the cooperation shown by the staff of Parks and Conservation Resources and Court and Operational Services during the course of this follow-up.

Respectfully Submitted,



Hector Collazo Jr.  
Inspector General/Chief Audit Executive

cc: Ken Burke, CPA, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller  
Jeff Gates, Director, Court and Operational Services



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# INTRODUCTION

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## ***Scope and Methodology***

We conducted an investigative follow-up of the Fort De Soto Parking Citation. The purpose of our follow-up is to determine the status of previous recommendations for improvement.

The purpose of the original investigation was to:

- 1) Determine if an officer issued a parking citation without basis.
- 2) Determine the parking citation included instructions to whom the check for the parking fines must be made payable to on the citation.

To determine the current status of our previous recommendations, we contacted Parks and Conservation Resources management and Court and Operational Services management to determine the actual actions taken to implement recommendations for improvement.

Our investigative follow-up was conducted in accordance with the *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General* and *The Florida Inspectors General Standards Manual* from The Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation and, accordingly, included such tests of records and other auditing procedures, as we considered necessary in the circumstances. Our follow-up testing was performed during the month of May, 2017. The original investigative period was October 1, 2016 through October 31, 2016. However, transactions and processes reviewed were not limited by the investigative period.

## ***Overall Conclusion***

Of the three recommendations in the report, we determined that one was implemented and two were not implemented. We commend management for implementation of one of our recommendations and continue to encourage management to fully implement the remaining recommendations.



## SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

OFI NO.	PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION STATUS				
		Implemented	Acceptable Alternative	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	No Longer Applicable
1	<b><i>Parking Citations Lack Clear Instructions To Whom The Check Must Be Written.</i></b>					
	Management include instructions on the citation as to whom the check for parking citation fines must be made payable.	✓				
2	<b><i>There Are No Signs Disallowing Bus, Mobile Home, And Trailer Parking Within The Arrowhead Picnic Area Parking Lot.</i></b>					
	Management consider installing additional signs restricting parking in the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area parking lot.				✓	
3	<b><i>The Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area Seawall is Unsafe For Kayak Launching.</i></b>					
	Management consider prohibiting or posting warning signs in an effort to prevent individuals from launching kayaks off the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area seawall.				✓	

## ***Background***



Parks and Conservation Resources (PCR) is a department dedicated to the preservation of Pinellas County's park land, environmentally sensitive land, healthy air, and the history of Pinellas County. The largest park within the Pinellas County park system, Fort De Soto consists of 1,136 acres made up of five interconnected islands (keys). These keys are home to beach plants, mangroves, wetlands, palm hammocks, hardwoods, and scores of native plants. The beach also provides refuge to the loggerhead sea turtles, which nest between April and September. Each of these species plays a vital role in the preservation and protection of the natural environment.

The park property was first purchased from the federal government in 1938 for \$12,500. In 1941, the property was sold back to the federal government for \$18,404 to be used as a gunnery and bombing range during World War II. The property was repurchased by Pinellas County from the United States in 1948 for \$26,500. The 12-inch mortar battery, located at the fort for which the park was named, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.

Fort De Soto was named America's Top Beach for 2009 by Trip Advisor, the world's largest online travel community. In 2005, "Dr. Beach" named Fort De Soto the nation's #1 Beach. Annual park attendance averages more than 2.7 million visitors. Amenities at Fort De Soto include:

- Historic fort
- Over 7 miles of waterfront
- 800-foot-long boat launching facility with eleven floating docks
- 238-site family camping area with facilities
- Primitive youth camping area
- 15 picnic shelters
- Restrooms
- Playgrounds

Introduction

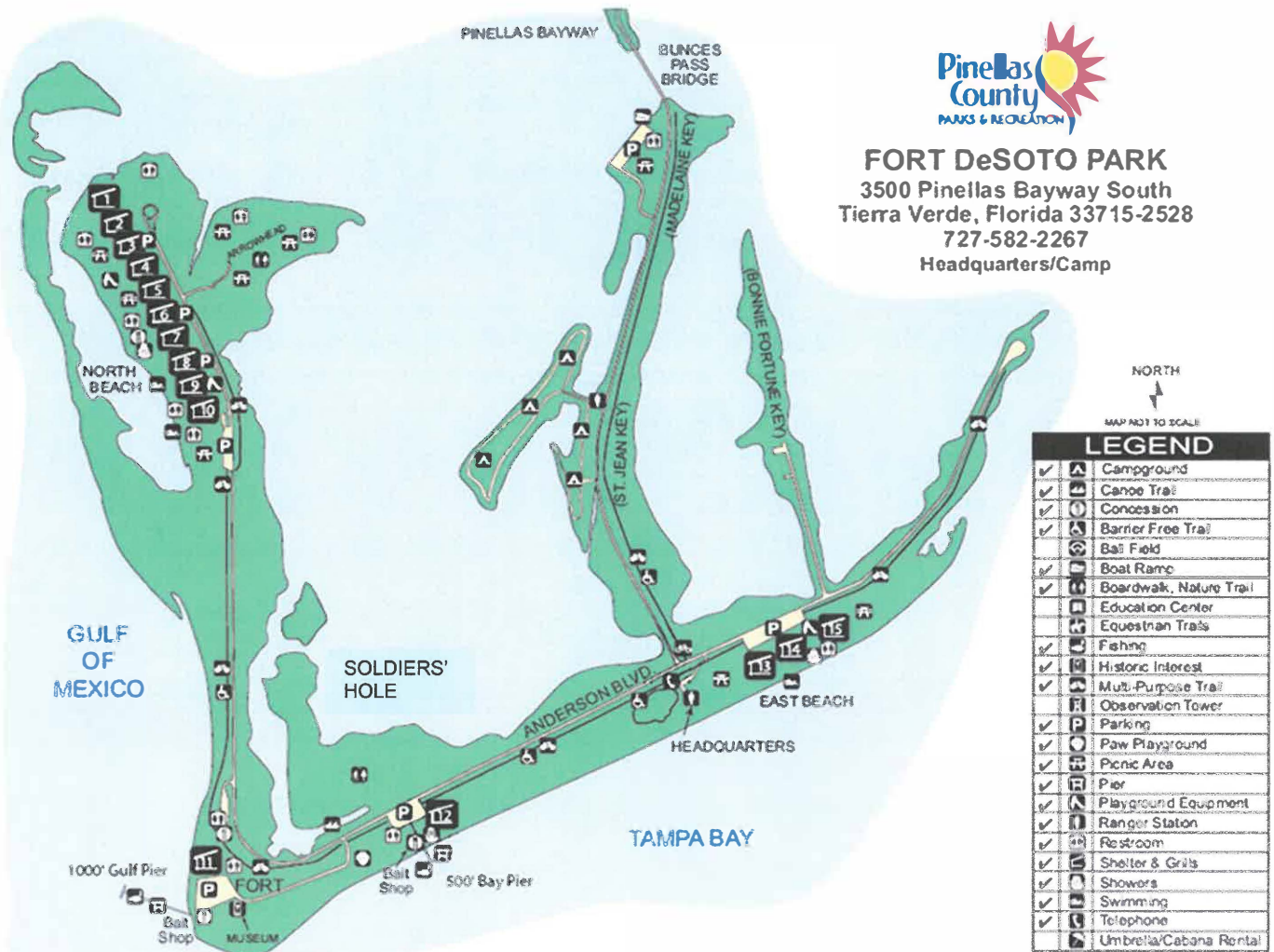
## Investigative Follow-Up of Fort De Soto Parking Citation

- Paved recreation trails
- Two large swim centers
- Lifeguard services
- Two fishing piers
- Ferry service to Egmont Key
- Concession/snack bar/souvenir shop
- Quartermaster Museum
- Recreational canoe trail
- Nature trails
- Dog park



Arrowhead Picnic Area is located in the northern part of Fort De Soto and includes a 1-mile nature trail.

The kayak rental and the kayak trail are located near the Soldiers' Hole along Anderson Boulevard.



On September 30, 2015, Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, forwarded a complaint he received from a citizen to the Division of Inspector General. The complaint pertained to a parking citation the citizen received for improper parking at the Arrowhead Picnic Area at Fort De Soto. The complainant alleged that:

1. An officer issued a parking citation at the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area without basis since there was no properly posted signage disallowing trailer parking and no parking restrictions posted in the Fort De Soto Park's brochure and on the website.
2. The parking citation issued by the officer does not include instructions to whom the check for parking fines must be made payable to on the citation.

The Division of Inspector General investigation of the allegations concluded the following:

1. **Unfounded.** A large sign disallowing bus, motor home, and trailer parking in the Arrowhead Picnic Area is posted at the parking entrance. The brochure available at Fort De Soto Park and on the PCR website clearly states that trailers are prohibited in the Arrowhead Family Picnic Area.
2. **Substantiated.** The parking citation and the attached envelope do not include instructions to whom the check must be made payable.



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# STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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This section reports our investigative follow-up on actions taken by management on the Recommendations for Improvement in our original investigative report of the Fort De Soto Parking Citation. The recommendations contained herein are those of the investigative report, followed by the current status of the recommendations.

## ***1. Parking Citations Lack Clear Instructions To Whom The Check Must Be Written.***

Parking citations issued at Fort De Soto do not include instructions to whom the fines are payable. Citizens may be confused as to who is the recipient of parking citation fines, either Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources or the Clerk of Court.

The envelope attached to the citation is addressed to the Clerk of Court. However, the citation includes the following statements:

DO NOT SEND CASH

PINELLAS COUNTY PARKS & CONSERVATION RESOURCES

No other instructions are included. The instructions to whom the check must be payable are not included on the parking citation.

This information may confuse citizens as to whom the check must be made payable. It may cause citizens to call the Clerk of Circuit Court Customer Information Line [(727) 464-7000] listed on the citation to determine who should be the recipient of the check. Parking citations should contain clear instructions as to whom the check for the fine must be made payable.

**We recommended** management include instructions on the citation as to whom the check for parking citation fines must be made payable.

### **Status:**

**Implemented.** Management from Parks and Conservation Resources submitted a sample of the parking citation with the new payment instruction that includes the following statement:

"MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:  
CLERK OF THE COURT  
14250 49<sup>TH</sup> STR. N. CLEARWATER, FL 33762"

## ***2. There Are No Signs Disallowing Bus, Mobile Home, And Trailer Parking Within The Arrowhead Picnic Area Parking Lot.***

There are no posted signs restricting parking within the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area parking lot. A properly posted and visible sign restricting parking is only posted at the entrance to the Arrowhead Picnic Area parking. Citizens who do not notice the sign at the park entrance may not be aware of the existing parking restrictions. When parking restrictions are in place, a sufficient number of signs containing clear restriction information should be posted in the affected area.

**We recommended** management consider installing additional signs restricting parking in the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area parking lot.

### **Status:**

**Not Implemented.** Management responded that they did not see an advantage to install additional parking signs within the Arrowhead Picnic Area. The risk that park visitors do not notice the parking restricting sign at the entrance to the Arrowhead Picnic Area remains. Management stated that the additional signage would create “sign pollution.” We continue to encourage management to implement our recommendation.

## ***3. The Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area Seawall Is Unsafe For Kayak Launching.***

The seawall in the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area is covered with a metal sheet which is sharp on the edges. Depending on the tide, there is at least a 3-4 foot drop from the top of the seawall to the water level. In addition, there are numerous sharp, underwater rocks at the bottom right of the seawall. Despite these unfavorable conditions, some individuals choose to launch their kayaks off the seawall.

Conditions of the seawall in the Arrowhead Picnic Area make the area unfavorable for kayak launching. Individuals launching kayaks off the seawall may get injured, which creates a liability for Pinellas County.

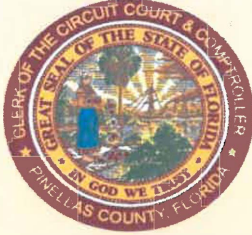
Kayaks should be launched from the designated launch areas or areas with easy and safe access to water.



**We recommended** management consider prohibiting or posting warning signs in an effort to prevent individuals from launching kayaks off the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area seawall.

**Status:**

**Not Implemented.** Management responded that an additional investigation found no significant evidence of kayakers attempting to launch from the seawall without first entering the water. Additional signage becomes a maintenance issue and would require postings to cover the hundreds of feet of seawall throughout the park. The risk that individuals may launch kayaks off the Arrowhead Picnic Area seawall remains. We continue to encourage management to implement our recommendation.



# DIVISION OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

KEN BURKE, CPA  
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT  
& COMPTROLLER  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

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